

California Members Reject Republican Budget Priorities

Democratic Lawmakers Believe California Families Deserve Better

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Washington, DC – As the U.S. House of Representatives continues to debate and vote on the FY2005 budget this week, members of the California Democratic Congressional Delegation, serving on a wide range of committees and representing regions across the state, commented on the misguided priorities of the Republican budget.

Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco): “The Californians want what all Americans want a budget that reflects the urgent priorities of their everyday lives - good jobs, better access to health care, the best education for their children, a clean environment, and a safe and secure America. Instead, this reckless Republican budget mortgages America's future with record deficits as far as the eye can see.”

Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-San Jose), Chair, California Democratic Congressional Delegation, Member, House Committee on Homeland Security: “Supporting our fire fighters, emergency personnel and other first responders must be a priority in the post 9/11 world, yet the Republican budget leaves our first responders behind. The Bush budget cuts first responder funding by \$648 million and cuts port security grants by 63 percent. And the House Republican budget is even worse, cutting homeland security funding by an additional \$155 million in 2005 and \$857 million over five years. Cutting this funding for America's first responders is not only irresponsible, it is disgraceful.”

Representative George Miller (D-Martinez), Senior Democrat, House Education and the Workforce Committee: “The House Republican Budget resolution shortchanges American children, students, and workers at a time when they most need assistance. The resolution includes the smallest increase in education funding in nine years. It cuts funding for family literacy programs, for elementary school counselors, and for job training. If this is the land of opportunity, how do we justify a budget that strips opportunities from so many deserving Americans?”

Representative Lois Capps (D-Santa Barbara), Member, House Budget Committee: “As a Member of the Budget Committee, I have been astounded by the choice being made by the Republican-led Congress and the President: endless tax cuts for the wealthiest to be paid for by cuts in Social Security, public education, veterans' health and other important needs for working families. I don't think that choice represents Central Coast values and it certainly doesn't represent mine. I'll vote against this reckless plan, and continue to push for responsible budgeting that promotes economic growth, provides the necessary investments, and brings us a balanced budget.”

Representative Bob Filner (D-Chula Vista), Senior Member, House Veterans' Affairs Committee: “Veterans are again being shortchanged by the Republican budget. Because of a lack of funds, thousands of veterans are being turned away, unable to enroll in VA's health care. The President is again recommending increases in co-payments for medicine and a user fee of \$250 for many veterans, proposals that were rejected by Congress last year. With new veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, this is not the time to skimp on care for veterans--it is one of the costs of war.”

Representative Tom Lantos (D-San Mateo, San Francisco), Senior Democrat, House International Relations Committee: “It is wrong to slash taxes for the wealthy while we spend less and less in real terms on the urgent needs and priorities of the American people. This budget adds billions to the deficit and the national debt, and does nothing to protect Social Security or Medicare. It continues to under-fund key education programs and veterans' programs, and will require reductions in health research, housing, and law enforcement. In addition, it reduces funding for transportation and environmental protection. This is a short-sighted and irresponsible budget, and I will continue to fight to make it a blueprint for the future, rather than a backward step into deficits and debt.”

Representative Pete Stark (D-Fremont), Senior Democrat, House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee: “Improving access to health care is a forgotten priority under this Republican budget despite the 44 million Americans who don't have health coverage. Republicans have taken aim at the most economically vulnerable families. Their \$13 billion cut in Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program will mean 1.6 million Americans - mostly children, pregnant women and the elderly - will lose their health care coverage.”

Representative Ellen Tauscher, (D-Contra Costa), Member, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee: "I think the people who wrote this budget have never been stuck in Bay Area rush hour traffic. The Department of Transportation indicated it would take \$375 billion to meet the nation's transportation needs, yet this budget comes in at \$100 billion less than what's needed. That's a lot of congestion relief communities across the country will be missing. And, when you factor in the nearly 48,000 jobs every billion dollars invested in highway construction creates, it's a big missed opportunity to improve both our economy and quality of life."

Representative Sam Farr (D-Carmel), Member, House Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee. "As the number one agricultural producing state in the Union, Californians depend on cutting edge research, protections against invasive species, and dependable access to markets to maintain our top industry. The last thing our hardworking farmers need is a Republican budget that slashes funding for food and agriculture programs - as the administration's proposal stands, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will take the largest budget hit of any cabinet level department. This budget is pennywise, pound foolish and once again looks through the rear view mirror while California continues to drive forward."

Representative Robert T. Matsui (D-Sacramento), Senior Democrat, House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee: "The Republicans' budget spends the entire Social Security surplus to pay for deficits caused by their reckless fiscal policies. As a result, the financial security of the more than 4.3 million Californians who rely on the program's benefits is at risk. And Republican plans to privatize Social Security make the system's financial condition even worse. Democrats will continue to fight to balance the budget, end the raid on Social Security and keep our promise to Social Security beneficiaries."

Representative Henry A. Waxman (D- Los Angeles), Senior Democrat, House Government Reform Committee: "The Republican leadership in the House has decided that they stand with the President in favor of cuts to environmental programs. They want to slash EPA's budget, decreasing the number of enforcement inspections, cutting funding to address leaking underground storage tanks, and providing inadequate money for safe drinking water, cleanups of Superfund sites and restoration of brownfields."

Representative Mike Thompson (D-Napa Valley), Member, House Budget Committee: "Extending budget enforcement mechanisms such as pay-as-you-go is critical to national deficit reduction. It's simple. Congress should pay for the legislation it passes. We should hold ourselves accountable to the same budgeting standards that families across California meet every day."